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Title : Alleged encroachment into tribal land by a private company in Attappadi, Kerala for setting up a Wind Energy Project.

SHRI KODIKKUNNIL SURESH (MAVELIKKARA): Sir, Attappady is one of the important tribal areas of Kerala which is located in the Palakkad district, the border of Tamil Nadu. Sir, you are very much aware of it.

Attappady is home to 6,000 tribal families in 180 hamlets scattered over 745 sq. km. in three panchayats. From being more than 91 per cent of the population in 1951, the tribals have since been reduced to a minority. The non-tribal population has increased considerably due to migration from Tamil Nadu and other parts of Kerala. There is a sharp decline in agriculture as well. The region has gradually suffered ecological degradation, resulting in all classes of land – private farms, forest, riverbanks, wetlands and common lands – becoming wasteland. By the early 1990s, more than 80 per cent of its people had sunk below the poverty line. Attappady was stricken with rampant child labour, migration to the plains and disease and hunger. The tribes slowly started migrating and shifted from agriculture to labour generated by welfare schemes. But when the villagers came back to their respective land, they found that outsiders had occupied their land and the sale documents that were shown also looked authentic.

Sir, in a particular area stretched over 224 acres; 50 acres belong to the forest department and the rest to the tribals. But the land mafia has bought and sold 400 acres by double-selling the same plot. Property is changing hands every few months, bringing profit to a small circle. Banks even offer loans against such property. Initially, duplicate documents are made in the name of individuals/middlemen, and then they transfer the land to corporates and multinationals. But the revenue records prove that the land really belongs to the tribals.

Under Kerala's Tribal Land Act of 1975, the tribal land can only be sold to other tribals and that too in unavoidable circumstances. The Supreme Court has asked the Government to cancel all transactions after 1986. But the law is subverted by convincing adivasis that the land is being taken on rent. Pune-based Sarjan Realities, which arranges land for Suzlon Energy Ltd., has managed to et 623 acres in Attappady, on which 30 windmills have been set up and most of this is in Sholayoor and Agali panchayats near Coimbatore area, the border of Tamil Nadu. When the project was inaugurated in 2007 by the State Power Minister, Suzlon announced, it aimed at producing 20 m.w. of power. However, the demand in the region is only 0.5 m.w., and most of the power would be utilized in other parts of Palakkad district.

The Left Democratic Front (LDF) Government in Kerala is not taking any steps to return the tribal people their land lost to the windmill company in Attappady. The incident of forcibly taking away the tribal land and putting up windmill farm over there was an encroachment on the rights of the tribal people. The Minister for Welfare of Scheduled and Backward Communities had stated that no action could be taken against the company since the land was purchased after the cut off date of the Tribal Land Restoration of 1986.

Sir, in Kerala, in the entire Attappady area, the tribal people have started their agitation. But so far the State Government of Kerala is not taking any step to return their land. So, Sir, I would like to request, through you, to the Government of India to intervene in this matter.